United Nations

Centre against Apartheid

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THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CULTURAL AND ACADEMIC LINKS WITH SOUTH AFRICA (LOS ANGELES, 11-12 MAY 1991)

The International Symposium on Cultural and Academic Links with South Africa, organized by the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid in co-operation with the City of Los Angeles, the Screen Actors Guild and the Directors Guild of America, was held in Los Angeles from 11 to 12 May 1991.

Prominent academics, artists, performers, film and theatre directors and writers from South Africa and around the world, representatives of the ANC and PAC and of anti-apartheid NGOs as well as producers and entertainment industry executives participated in the Symposium. In the light of recent developments in South Africa, they reviewed the policy on cultural and academic links with that country which had been adopted at the First Symposium on Culture against Apartheid held in Athens in 1988. The participants adopted the following statement:

The Los Angeles Statement

Three years after the First Symposium on Culture against Apartheid held in Athens, artists and intellectuals from South Africa and around the world met in Los Angeles, in May 1991, under the sponsorship of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid to review the policy of cultural and academic links with South Africa within the context of recent developments in that country.

We, the participants, recognize that since the Symposium in Athens certain steps have been taken towards the eradication of apartheid. However, we note that the South African authorities have not fully met the demands put forward by the United Nations consensus Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa to create a climate conducive to negotiations. Nor are they addressing the legacy of institutionalized racism and apartheid in spite of their declared intent to repeal apartheid legislation.

We express grave concern at the unprecedented escalation of violence. While efforts are being made by liberation movements, churches and other groups to address the issue of violence, the authorities, until now, have been unwilling to put an end to the violence decisively and impartially despite all the resources at their disposal. In this regard, the participants reject the concept that , in this charged atmosphere, weapons of any kind can be considered as "traditional" or "cultural" necessities.

We feel that continued efforts are required to disseminate information in order to counter the misconception that apartheid is already eliminated. In this regard, we believe that in this crucial period of the struggle, pressure should be fully maintained until a non-racial and democratic constitution is established and that assistance should be provided to anti-apartheid structures in conformity with the United Nations Declaration and subsequent resolutions.

We reaffirm the policy of the cultural boycott which was established in Athens and subsequently endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly which called on Governments, organizations and individuals not to entertain any cultural or academic links with South Africa unless any particular activity in these fields have the intent and effect of opposing apartheid and giving appropriate assistance to the anti-apartheid structures and to the disadvantaged sectors of the South African society.

We welcome the initiatives taken towards the formation of an umbrella non-partisan cultural body and urge its early establishment in order to facilitate consultations between the international community of artists and intellectuals and that body in fulfillment of the above mentioned policy.

The academic links with South Africa should have as a primary goal the need to redress the disastrous imbalances in education created by apartheid. In the context of the overall policy, the free flow to South Africa of publications, music, films and other art forms and material should be encouraged only to the extent that they contribute to the building of a non-racial culture of democratic and humanistic values.

Writers and artists from abroad should be encouraged to assist in fund-raising in favour of non-racial organizations in South Africa or help in the training of South African artists and in supporting relevant community programmes.

Those artists, intellectuals and entertainers who have made over the years an immense contribution to the struggle against apartheid should be fittingly acknowledged.

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We call upon Governments, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, foundations, educational institutions and individuals to desist from establishing cultural and academic links and exchanges with the apartheid institutions in South Africa.

We call upon the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid to adopt the policy recommended by the Symposium and to monitor its implementation, in consultation with the non-partisan cultural body in South Africa.

We reaffirm our commitment and continued support for the struggle waged by the South African people to establish a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa.